LXXXIII. *Extract of a Letter from* Wm. Dixon, *Eſq*; *F. R S. to Mr.* W. Watſon, *F. R. S. from* Loverſall *near* Doncaſter *in* Yorkſhire, June 1, 1752. *concerning ſome* vegetable Balls; *with Remarks on them by Mr.* Wm. Watſon.

Dear Sir,

Read June 18, 1752. I HAVE ſent you ſome balls, which ſeem to me to be plants of a very particular kind. They were taken up in a freſh-water lake, on a large common in the Eaſt Riding of Yorkſhire, about twelve miles weſt of Hull. The lake is from one hundred to two hundred acres in bigneſs, according to different ſeaſons, and empties into the Humber; which is pretty ſalt, and has ſometimes infected it a little at very high tides. The water is very bright, and the bottom in many places is quite cover'd with theſe balls, like a pavement, at different depths. Theſe now ſent were about ſix inches under water; and many are left quite dry every ſummer. Whether they are particular to this place, I know not, having no deſcription of them in my botanic library. To you, who have ſo general an acquaintance in that branch of natural knowlege, they may prove old acquaintance. [Thus far Mr. Dixon.]

The vegetable here mention'd, and which I take the liberty of laying before you, I have never ſeen till now; neither have I been able to find it deſcribed in any of the botanic writers, whom I have conſulted. The matter, of which it is compoſed, is that of a *conferva*; and ſhould therefore have had a place under that genus

genus in Dillenius's *Hiſtoria Muſcorum*. They are of a deep-green moſſy colour, are hollow, of an irregularly ſpherical figure, and of different ſizes, from an inch and half to three inches in diameter. They are cover'd with very ſhort *villi* externally, and the thickneſs, from their external to their internal ſurface, is about a quarter of an inch; their texture is moſt compact the neareſt to the ſurface. I ſhould denominate them globoſe *conferva*.

Mr. Ray, in his hiſtory of plants, Vol. I. p. 83, deſcribes a plant, which he found in Sicily, ſomething like this now ſent by Mr. Dixon. When treating of the *Algæ Pomum* of John Bauhin, which, according to this laſt, was of the colour of ſponge, he ſays, *Quod nos in Siciliæ littoribus invenimus, colore erat viridi, et propius accedebat ad burſæ marinæ Cæſalpini deſcriptionem; erat enim intus concavum, ex muſcoſa ſeu ſpongioſa ſcilicet capillari ſubſtantia conſtans, et oſtiolum habebat rotundum, qua lapidibus adhærebat.*

The plant now before you wants the *oſtiolum*, by which it adheres to the rocks, taken notice of by Mr. Ray, in all the ſpecimens I have ſeen; and, from its moſſy ſubſtance, can by no means be ranged under the genus of *alcyonium*, where Mr. Ray has given us the paſſage juſt now mention'd.